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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9116
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4027
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4182
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUALSFJ/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA CC SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J5 SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J-5// PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 000623

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TAGS: [MCAP](#) [MNUC](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [KN](#) [KS](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: ROKG DOWNPLAYS NORTH KOREAN STYX MISSILE TEST

REF: A. IIR 6 855 0152 08
[1](#)B. SEOUL 616

Classified By: CDA Bill Stanton. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) The Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense (MND) has confirmed Korean media reports that the North Korean People's Army (KPA) test fired three Russian-made Styx anti-ship missiles into the West Sea (Yellow Sea) at approximately 10:30 a.m. local time on Friday March 28. (Note: Due to high classification, further details are only available at this time through intelligence community channels).

[1](#)2. (C) The ROK Government responded very calmly, downplaying the incident. Cheong Wa Dae (Blue House) spokesman Lee Dong-kwan stated shortly after the test that "The Government regards North Korea's missile firing as merely a part of its ordinary military training." According to the spokesman, President Lee was first briefed on the news during a regular meeting with senior presidential secretaries, "but didn't show any extraordinary response." MND intended at first to issue a short statement verifying the launches and characterizing them as relatively routine, but the head of their America Policy Division informed us later in the day that its release was being held up indefinitely by Government investigators who were looking into the unauthorized release of sensitive information to the Korean media.

[1](#)3. (C) As reported reftel A, a senior Chinese diplomat in Seoul had predicted several weeks ago that the DPRK would attempt to raise regional tension by inciting an incident in the West Sea or conducting a missile test this spring. Possible reasons cited by that source include: DPRK frustration with the USG, which it claims is responsible for the current lack of progress in the Six-Party Talks; the KPA's retort to the U.S.-ROK KEY RESOLVE military exercise which took place on the Korean Peninsula earlier this month; and an expression of Pyongyang's displeasure with the harder-line policy being voiced by the newly-elected Lee Myung-bak Administration. The missile launches, which came only a day after the DPRK expelled 11 ROK officials from the Kaesong Industrial Complex (ref B), may also have been another attempt to influence the ROK's April 9 National Assembly elections, given that the DPRK has frequently employed such tactics in the past.

14. (C) Today's missile test was unusual, but not unprecedented. Typically, the KPA has tested Styx missiles (which have a range of 40-80 kilometers) by firing them into the East Sea (Sea of Japan). Last June, the DPRK also test fired three Toksa (modified Silkworm) surface-to-ship missiles with a range of 100-120 kilometers into the West Sea. Those launches were believed to be in response to contentious North-South discussions on the Northern Limit Line (NLL). There were also unconfirmed reports that the North test-launched a similar single short-range Toksa missile into the East Sea on May 26, 2007. That launch was believed to be in response to the ROK Navy test launch the previous day of anti-ship missiles from its new Aegis destroyer, King Sejong. The DPRK also test launched at least two Toksa missiles on March 8 and 9, 2006 in the period preceding the highly publicized unsuccessful launch of a Taepodong-2 ballistic missile (and other short and mid-range missiles) into the East Sea on July 5th 2006. In any interpretation of what the latest missile test means, we cannot therefore exclude the fact that they are also part of North Korea's ongoing missile development programs.

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